

Amendments to the Specification:

1) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 1, line 6 as follows:

The present invention generally relates to a fastener and fastening arrangement for detachably interconnecting punched documents. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system in which a prong-type binding system is made more efficient, providing a fastener which will hold a group of documents securely together while allowing easy removal of documents positioned within the group ~~of secured documents~~ without disturbing, misaligning or disconnecting other documents within the group.

2) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 10 as follows:

FIG. 3B is a perspective view of an improved fastening arrangement in accordance with the present invention showing the outer prongs and the inner prongs engaged;

3) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 12 as follows:

FIGS. 4A-4B show ~~FIG. 4 shows~~ the steps for binding and unbinding documents utilizing the paper fastener of FIGS. 3A and 3B;

4) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 17 as follows:

FIG. 5B is a perspective view of an improved fastening arrangement in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention showing the outer prongs and the inner prongs engaged;

5) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 17 as follows:

FIGS. 6A-6B show ~~FIG. 6 shows~~ the steps for binding and unbinding documents utilizing the paper fastener of FIGS. 5A and 5B;

6) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 1 as follows:

FIG. 7B is a perspective view of an improved fastening arrangement in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention showing outer prongs and the inner prongs engaged; and

7) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 3 as follows:

FIG. 8 shows the steps for binding and unbinding documents utilizing the paper fastener of FIGS. 7A and 7B;

8) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 12 as follows:

Referring to FIGS. 4A-4B ~~FIG. 4~~, the steps for binding and unbinding documents utilizing the fastening arrangement of FIGS. 3A and 3B is described. The process begins at step 1 with stacking documents with binding holes aligned to form a stack A. Fastener 38 including outer prongs 37 can be inserted through a hole-punched folder, clip-board, paper, or the like, to form a platform on which stack A can be securely attached. However, one of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that a platform is not essential and stack A may be connected directly to base 11 of fastener 38. Once aligned, the holes passing through stack A form a passageway for receiving outer prongs 37. Next, in step 2, stack A is guided over

fastener 38 by fitting the holes around outer prongs 37. Depending on the size of stack A and/or fluctuations in the alignment of the holes punched into the documents contained in the stack, this task may require splitting stack A into several smaller stacks and individually guiding each smaller stack over fastener 38. Once prongs 37 have completely engaged each document of stack A, extending therethrough, outer prongs 37 are bent 90° toward each other and brought to rest against stack A, thereby securing the sheets of the stack with prong base 11. Bending outer prongs 37 in any location other than the topmost extension portion 32 will result in the concurrent bending of inner prongs 10 and have the additional effect of not only securing stack A, but also securing inner and outer prongs 10 and 37 together.

9) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 20 as follows:

Therefore in accordance with a salient aspect of the present invention, step 3 has stack A divided into two stacks, stack D and stack C. For clarity in explanation, we will assume that all of the documents in stack C are desired to be disconnected (removed) from fastener 38 and that all documents in stack D are desired to remain aligned and securely bound in fastener 38 after the removal of the stack C. Outer prongs 37 with contained inner prongs 10 are bent 90° away from stack A (i.e., to a generally upright condition). ~~Referring to step 4, with~~ With outer prongs 37 now pointing upward and the topmost extension portion 32 of each outer prong 37 extending through stack A, the outer prongs 37 are bent 90° inward, toward stack A, at or above prong cover 30 (at a location of extension portion 32) as shown in step 4. The significance of bending the outer prongs at a point above prong cover 30 is that, in this area,

where outer prong 37 does not contain inner prong 10, only the outer prong is being bent, leaving inner prong 10 unaffected, unbent and generally upright.

10) Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 12, line 11 as follows:

Referring to FIGS. 6A-6B ~~FIG. 6~~, the steps for binding and unbinding documents utilizing the fastening arrangement of FIGS. 5A and 5B is described. The process begins at step 1 with stacking documents with binding holes aligned to form a stack A. Once aligned, the holes passing through stack A form a passageway for receiving outer prongs 57. Next, in step 2, stack A is guided over fastener 58 by fitting the holes around outer prongs 57. Once prongs 57 have completely engaged each document of stack A, extending therethrough, outer prongs 57 are bent 90° toward each other and brought to rest against stack A, thereby securing the sheets of the stack with prong base 11. Bending outer prongs 57 will result in the concurrent bending of inner prongs 10 and have the additional effect of not only securing stack A, but also securing inner and outer prongs 10 and 57, respectively, together.

11) Please add the following paragraph after the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 3:

Prong cover 30 and side flange 31 can be of varying longitudinal lengths and can be located in various locations along outer prong 37 without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention. Additionally side flange 31 can extend horizontally along the entire width of outer prong 37. In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present the invention, the length of prong cover 30 is approximately between 1/3 and 1/16 the length of

inner prong 10. Also, side flange 31 preferably extends horizontally from opposite ends of tab 39 and spans the full width of outer prong 37.